

SMITH, Charles Roach T. 844.15

## ROMAN HISTORY FROM COINS<sup>a</sup>.

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THE vast historical importance of ancient coins has hitherto been felt rather than fully appreciated; for to the present day their study is confined to the few, and it is in no way enforced as a necessary auxiliary to scholastic training. It does not, indeed, seem even to be recommended. And yet historical education cannot be said to be complete or perfect without it. Some of our best writers have fallen into grave errors from which even a superficial knowledge of ancient coins would have guarded them. That the study of numismatics is difficult will not be urged as an excuse for its being neglected, for it can be cultivated with success by every classical scholar. That it is expensive may be pleaded with greater propriety. Few persons who enter upon any science will long be satisfied with books only: the botanist is anxious to see and examine the flowers and the plants themselves; the geologist cannot be contented with models and diagrams; the sculptor, the painter, and the architect, if they would attain eminence in their respective professions, travel far and wide to see the works of which they have read, and to draw inspiration from the objects themselves. But few, however, are called upon to study these and other arts and sciences as professions, while history is more or less, or should be, the business of every man of education; and coins are among the tangible facts which confirm and illustrate it.

But when fifty or a hundred guineas are quoted as the cost of a single coin, it must not be inferred that all are expensive: hundreds may sometimes be purchased for a few pounds, or even shillings; and the student who could decipher and explain fifty or a hundred Greek or Roman coins would be somewhat far advanced in the grammar of the science. There is a laudable pleasure, too, in the collecting of coins, especially when it is to answer a higher purpose than the mere collecting and hoarding. The volumes the title of which heads these remarks, shew how collections grow from small beginnings, and how valuable they may be rendered when selected with judgment, and studied in a spirit of scientific inquiry with that love of truth which seasons and qualifies enthusiasm.

The Italians, the Germans, and the French have written voluminous works on ancient coins, many of which display profound learning and wonderful powers of research; but they are necessarily costly and not very accessible. In our own country it is only within the present century that

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<sup>a</sup> "Records of Roman History from Cnæus Pompeius to Tiberius Constantinus, as exhibited on the Roman Coins collected by Francis Hobler, formerly Secretary of the Numismatic Society of London. 2 vols., 4to." (London: Nichols and Son.)

this useful study has been at all popularised. Pinkerton's "Essay on Coins and Medals" for a long time was almost the only work that gave a good general view of the subject; Mr. Akerman's publications may be truly referred to as the chief cause of the more extended cultivation of the science of numismatics which now prevails; and the "Numismatic Chronicle," which has nearly extended to twenty volumes, contains papers on the various branches of numismatology replete with novel and valuable discovery. The materials on which the numismatist works would seem to be, like those of nature, inexhaustible; and this is evident when we examine such books as Captain (now Admiral) Smyth's "Descriptive Catalogue" of his cabinet of large brass Roman coins, and Mr. Hobler's volumes. Neither the one nor the other professes to be a complete essay on any one series of coins: they are simply expositions of cabinets of coins collected as favourable chances occurred; and yet they contain much information of a novel and peculiar kind, which the student will think indispensable. Numerous links he will, of course, find wanting; but then he finds the coins which are described treated with so much care, and so fully discussed, that he is led to estimate their true value, and is shewn how they should be studied.

Mr. Hobler rightly considered that his collection was too valuable to be dispersed; and he used every effort to place it where it could be easily referred to. With this view he offered it to the City of London, to Liverpool, to Manchester, and, we believe, to some other large towns; but in vain; and circumstances caused it to follow the fate of most collections of a similar kind. This is to be the less regretted now his elaborate descriptive catalogue is published; and illustrated, we may add, by the admirable woodcuts, which reveal at once the skill of the artist (Mr. Fairholt) and his knowledge of the objects on which it was exerted.

In order to afford our readers some notion of the contents of these volumes, we select here and there a coin; but our remarks, we should premise, are confined more to new varieties than to what may be considered the most historically important.

*Marcus Antonius.* A coin in bronze from the Pembroke cabinet, cited by Eckhel, Morell, and others. It bears the heads of M. Antony and Octavius facing that of a female, with a galley on the reverse and the name of M. Oppius Capito, Proprætor and Marine Prefect. Contrary to the opinions of some eminent numismatists, Mr. Hobler assigns the female head on the obverse to Octavia, and not to Cleopatra. As upon many of his coins the portrait of Mark Antony is accompanied by that of Cleopatra, and but very rarely by that of Octavia, the likeness must, in this and similar cases, decide. The features and head attire of Cleopatra are so marked and so unlike those of Octavia, that the eye can readily distinguish, in absence of the name, which is intended to be represented. As we are supplied with an engraving of the coin in question, we readily agree with Mr. Hobler that the portrait appears to be intended for that of Octavia.



*Augustus.* A second-brass coin with AVGVSTVS . TRIBVNIC . POTEST . within a palm branch, and on the reverse P . STOLO . IIIVIR . A . A . A . F . F . Dr. Cardwell in his "Numismatic Lectures," p. 189, believed he had discovered the earliest record of the *Tribunicia Potestas* of Augustus on a denarius of his eighth year struck by the *Triumvir Monetalis* L . VINICIVS . L . F . TR . POT . viii., being, as Dr. Cardwell writes, "The first coin on which the TRIB . POT . appears, although assumed by Augustus eight years before." By the authority of Occo, Eckhel, and others, the above coins takes precedence of that quoted by Dr. Cardwell, to the extent of seven years.

ROM . ET . AVG . beneath an altar between two columns. The well-known coin of Augustus commemorative of the altar erected at Lugdunum. This is described at length, and we only cite it to observe that in the church of Aisny at Lyons, built at the confluence of the Rhone and Saone where it is supposed this altar stood, are two granite columns which are considered to be the actual pillars figured on the coins ; but when entire, they must have been upwards of twenty feet high, and are, therefore, more likely to have belonged to some public edifice.

DIVA . AVGVSTA . Veiled head of Livia, forming the reverse of a second-brass coin of Augustus. Mr. Hobler remarks:—"This coin is, I believe, unique. It seems to be the only coin in brass on which an authentic portrait of Livia is to be found. The coins with heads of Pietas, Salus, and Justitia, which are usually claimed to be portraits of Livia, are really not so ; they are ideal heads created by the artists to represent the moralities or virtues the names denote."

*Marcus Agrippa.* A unique second-brass coin, having for its reverse the figure of Neptune with some unusual accessories. In the upper part of the field of the coin are two stars, or a sun and a star ; and on the lower part, behind Neptune, a crescent and a star. Mr. Hobler interprets the latter as signifying the downfall of Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium, and the former the consequent ascendancy of Augustus.

*Julia, daughter of Augustus.* The coins inscribed S . P . Q . R . IVLIAE . AVGVST . above a *carpentum funebre*, almost universally assigned to Livia, the wife of Augustus, (also called Julia,) Mr. Hobler, from chronological data, considers should belong to Julia, daughter of Augustus and wife of Tiberius, by whose orders the coins were probably struck, after her death.

*Claudius.* Some of the coins of Claudius relate to the conquest of Britain, and are therefore particularly interesting. Connected with this event is the celebrated Barberini inscription, which has excited so much discussion. Mr. Hobler very properly devotes considerable space to a review of the opinions in past times and recently which have been published concerning it. In this he is assisted by Mr. Fairholt's sketch of the monument itself. (See GENT. MAG., Oct. 1858, p. 383 ; and Jan. 1859, p. 65.)

*Nero.* Among the numerous very beautiful coins of this emperor, those with a view of the port of Ostia are remarkable for the crowded, but at the same time clearly depicted, figures, which are admirably arranged so as to give a good notion of the port itself upon the circumference of an inch. A statue upon a pedestal, which is supposed to have served as a pharos, indicates the entrance. Vessels of various kinds float in the water, and the position of the port is shewn by a personification of Neptune in the foreground. The circumference of the field of the coin is filled with buildings, which may be considered, probably, as

warehouses and temples; and, from recent explorations, archways for the currents of water flowing to and from the Mediterranean. These coins are discussed at considerable length in connection with those of Trajan, also representing this port, and from historical evidence and a memoir of M. Texier, the engineer, whose plan of the port from actual survey is given, Mr. Hobler appears fully justified in concluding that "the two coins of Nero and Trajan have hitherto been very unsatisfactorily explained: they have been regarded as referring to separate places, far distant from each other: whereas now I think it is by this note (M. Texier's) clearly and satisfactorily shewn that the two coins, PORT. OSTIA of Nero, and PORTVM. TRAIANI (or PORT. OST.) of Trajan, should be read together."

*Vespasian.* SIGNIS. RECEPTIS. The emperor, in military costume, and standing upon a low pedestal, receiving a standard from a winged Victory. It has been considered that this type refers to the recovery of the standards taken from the Romans in Germany, by Civilis, A.D. 78. As the coin was struck in the third consulate of Vespasian, (A.D. 71,) this opinion falls to the ground. Mr. Hobler suggests that it relates to the recovery of an eagle taken from one of the legions by the Jews, in the reign of Nero, when they defeated Cestius Gallus, as stated by Tacitus. Vespasian soon afterwards received the command of the forces in Syria and Judæa. The coin with VICTORIA AVGVSTI, Victory holding a standard, probably alludes to the same event.

*Domitian.* An altar of large dimensions approached by a flight of steps. It is richly ornamented with columns, between which are groups of figures. On each side of the altar stands a robed figure, upon a pedestal, holding a patera. Above is the word PACIS. This coin (in second brass) appears to have been hitherto unpublished. The series of coins of this emperor struck on the celebration of the Sæcular games is copiously commented on, and some novel suggestions are offered on the reading of the legend A. POP. FRVG. AC. Two, in brass, the one an eagle upon an ear of corn, the other an equestrian statue of Domitian, are extremely rare if not novel types.

*Trajan.* The coins of this emperor with architectural representations afford an opportunity for some sensible observations by the author and by Professor Donaldson. That many of the Roman bridges were constructed of wood upon massive stone piers is an admitted fact; as, for instance, the remains of one across the north Tyne on the line of the great Roman wall. In describing the coins relating to the Dacian war, Mr. Hobler speaks of the earth-works called Trajan's Wall, and the discovery within the last three years of an ancient Roman canal leading from the lower part of the Danube into the Euxine sea, which a company is now forming to cleanse and re-establish. Unfortunately we possess but very loose information on those remains; and the advantages afforded by the late war for scientific explorations were not embraced by the Government. The French, it is stated, were more considerate. Among some other types in brass, not mentioned by Eckhel and others, is that of CONSERVATORI PATRIS PATRIAE. Jupiter standing by the side of the emperor. It partly illustrates another with I. O. M. above a triumphal arch; and both, with several analogous coins, are further explained by passages in Pliny's "Panegyric." It was in the Forum of Trajan, a splendid building which excited the admiration even of a Roman posterity, and of which coins preserve a picture, that his successor Hadrian burnt the bonds and registers of accumulated public debts, amounting, it is calculated, to between seven and eight millions of pounds sterling. The coins recording



this event couple it with the third consulate, though it appears to have taken place at a somewhat earlier period. This *post* dating is not unusual : such acts, indeed, deserved to be kept in remembrance.

*Hadrian.* Under this emperor the coinage seems to have arrived at the highest perfection, both artistically and historically. The fine series which records the emperor's visits to the provinces is of especial interest for the personifications. Britain occupies a prominent position in it. We have the advent of Hadrian, the Province itself seated upon a rock with spear and shield ; and the emperor addressing the British legions. With these are allied the *Adlocutio* and *Disciplina* types, the latter peculiar to the coins of Hadrian. They are well explained by Mr. Hobler ; but we may add to his remarks on the latter that it was from a knowledge of this particular legend that an inscription, found near the Roman wall, and which had long remained unexplained, was restored to Hadrian<sup>b</sup>. The conjoint study of coins and inscriptions is of mutual advantage to both of these classes of ancient monuments ; for where one is obscure it frequently happens that the other is capable of affording the required information. Towards the conclusion of the coins of Hadrian, which occupy a prominent place in the first volume of these "Records," Mr. Hobler introduces a medallion from the Devonshire cabinet, but which, he observes, passed unnoticed at the sale. The reverse, without legend, bears a representation of five figures, namely, Rome and Hadrian joining hands ; behind the latter an undraped female ; in the foreground, in reclining attitudes, Terra and Oceanus. It appears from the engraving and description to be in fine preservation, and to have been hitherto undescribed ; and, therefore, we must infer either that some suspicion was attached to it at the sale, or by unaccountable negligence it was overlooked.

*Antoninus Pius.* DEO . HERCVLI . P . . SALVT . IMP . A figure of Hercules with club and lion's skin. This also was from the Devonshire cabinet, and appears to be unique and unpublished. In this case lapidary inscriptions, as observed above, may help ; and we suggest that the reading should be *Deo Herculi pro salute Imperatoris*. It does not bear the usual s.c. indicative of having been struck by order of the senate, and may possibly on that account be regarded rather as a medallion than a first-brass coin. Some of the coins of this emperor also relate to Britain, and they receive due attention from the author's pen. All who have studied the personifications of Britain will fully support Mr. Hobler's opinion that in no respect can the figure be taken for that of Rome, as a recent numismatic writer inconsiderately asserts. The details of events which called for the coins commemorative of the imperial sanction given to the Quadi and to the Armenians to elect certain kings, or probably their direct nomination by the emperor, are specially unrecorded in written history ; but Capitolinus (cap. ix.) supplies ample information for us to understand why these coins were struck, as well as the rare brass coin with a figure of Rome armed and resting her shield, inscribed DACIA, upon the head of a seated captive. It doubtless commemorates the repression of the Dacii, expressly mentioned by this historian. Pius curbed the arrogance of numerous barbarous nations ; gave audience to kings, deposing some and appointing others. A lover of peace, his chronicler says that no one ever possessed such authority over foreign powers ; and this will explain why his coins do not exhibit the constant allusions to victories and triumphs which appear upon those of many of his predecessors and successors. "He pre-

<sup>b</sup> *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. ii. p. 175.

ferred saving one citizen to killing a thousand enemies," is the golden eulogy of Capitolinus. In the rich series of coins of Pius several new varieties are noted, and some wholly novel, as, for instance, a small medallion, of exquisite workmanship, with a representation of Diana with her dog, full of spirit and life. Mr. Hobler says he has not seen any modern coin, except the Petition Crown of Simon, that could be compared with it. This is, however, not saying enough for it, and for hundreds of other ancient coins.

*M. Aurelius.* A large brass coin, with the figures of the emperor and soldiers grouped, is in the *Adlocutio* type; but with the words PROVIDENTIA AVG. The word *providentia*, usually significant of the superintending care of the gods, is here applied to the emperor as father of the army and its guide and provider. In the same sense it appears upon coins of the Constantine family, with the gate of a military fortress. A brass medallion of great beauty represents a shipwright at work upon the prow of a galley, beneath the entrance of a town or castrum, the goddess Minerva superintending. Mr. Hobler considers the device suggested by Virgil's account of the Trojan exiles building their fleet under the walls of Antandros; but the poet does not make Minerva or Anchises prominent in the scene; while, we may observe, there is another medallion of Aurelius, with Minerva standing, and Vulcan with hammer and thunderbolt, seated. The unpublished variety may, therefore, as probably bear reference to events in real life. A similar subject on a *terra-cotta* has been interpreted as Danaus, guided by Minerva in building the ship Argo. A medallion, the subject of which is the emperor on horseback, armed with a hunting-spear, striking at a wild boar, seems another novel addition.

*Commodus.* The silence of coins during the preceding reign shews that the mission of Calphurnius Agricola to Britain tended to the pacification of the barbarous nations to the north of the Antonine boundary. Under Commodus they speak again. The victories of Ulpian Marcellus called forth some of the finest productions of the Roman mint, which are now deservedly prized. Besides those inscribed *Britannia*, and *Vict. Brit.*, are others which we think with Mr. Hobler relate to battles gained in Britain, as, for example, those in vol. ii. pp. 588-9; and the same remark may apply to the *Britannia* types of Severus, Caracalla, and Geta.

*Philip.* Passing over numerous coins of great interest which have worthily and successfully exercised the author's criticism, our attention is directed to Mr. Fairholt's illustration of a remarkable first-brass coin of the elder Philip, which is not so fully explained as many, neither is its great rarity noted. In the "Sale Catalogue" it is marked *unknown*; and such it appears to have been. It is without legend. To the left stands a female, whom we can recognise at once as Hygeia or Salus, holding a patera upon an altar, from which rises a serpent. On the side of the altar are the letters s. c. To the right is a seated female, holding in her lap a basket of fruits; before her stand two veiled females, the nearer of whom holds in her hand a flat circular object. We cannot call to mind any similar representation upon coins; but there is a close analogy between the seated personage and the *Deæ matres*, in sculptures discovered in Italy, France, Germany, and in England, many of which are certainly of the time of Philip, or thereabouts. The manner in which these rural deities and their attributes are sculptured is so peculiarly uniform that it appears to us there must be a close affinity between them and this figure, and indeed identity, except that they are



usually exhibited in a triad. The two standing females seem to be making offerings.

*Carausius.* The coins with four military standards, and the legend COHORT. PRAET. is of the first degree of rarity. Of course the regular Prætorian cohorts cannot be here implied, but a body of troops acting in Britain in a somewhat similar capacity in relation to Carausius. The exergual letter c may rather denote Camulodunum than Clausentum. The latter stood upon the site of the manor-house and grounds at Bittern, near Southampton.

We conclude our review of this valuable work by noticing the author's reading of the exergual letters P.L.C., P.L.N., and P.LON., on the coins of the Constantine family. That the last of these inscriptions refers to Londinium there can be no doubt; but Mr. Hobler gives the other to London also. He is not alone in this attribution, which has, also, been recently supported by the Count de Salis, in a paper read before the Numismatic Society. On the other hand, Mr. Roach Smith, after an examination of 1,200 small brass coins found in the neighbourhood of Lyons, observed such a very marked distinction in the workmanship of the numerous coins reading PLC and SLC, and very few specimens with P.LON, as to lead him to conclude that they all could not have been struck at the same place, and he assigned the former to Lugdunum (Lyons<sup>c</sup>). It is also to be observed that the P.LON coins are frequently found in this country, and but seldom on the Continent. C.R.S

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<sup>c</sup> Proceedings of the Numismatic Society, 1847-8, p. 13.

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